

Message Text

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TAGS: OREP (FLOWERS, WALTER)

SUBJECT: CODEL FLOWERS - MEETING WITH DEFENSE MINISTER PERES

1. MINISTER PERES MET WITH CODEL FLOWERS (HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE) NOV. 12. IN HIS OPENING REMARKS PERES PRESENTED A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE EMPHASIZING THAT THE JEWISH PEOPLE ARE 4,000 YEARS OLD WHILE THE STATE OF ISRAEL IS ONLY 28 YEARS OLD. FROM THE DAY OF ITS BIRTH ISRAEL HAS HAD TO FIGHT FOR ITS EXISTENCE, INCLUDING FOUR MAJOR WARS AND A CONTINUOUS FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM. DURING THIS PERIOD ISRAEL HAS NEVER COMPROMISED FREEDOM OR DEMOCRACY AND HAS PROCEEDED WITH ITS TWO BASIC TASKS: TO ASSEMBLE THE JEWISH TRIBES, AND TO RESTORE THE LAND. THOUGH ISRAEL HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN WAR, THE GREATEST VICTORY WILL BE TO WIN THE PEACE. HOWEVER, THIS WILL BE DIFFICULT BECAUSE ISRAEL FACES A DIVIDED ARAB WORLD WITH DIFFERENT TEMPERAMENTS AND VIEWS AS TO WHAT CONSTITUTES AN ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION.

2. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS, MINISTER PERES EXPRESSED THE FOLLOWING VIEWS:

A. ISRAEL IS READY TO NEGOTIATE THE RETURN OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES IN EXCHANGE FOR PEACE. IN THE SINAI THEY ARE
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PAGE 02 TEL AV 07779 170842Z

WILLING TO GIVE UP ALL BUT A STRIP ALONG THE GULF OF EILAT WHICH WILL SERVE AS A LAND GUARANTEE AGAINST A FUTURE

BLOCKADE OF THE STRAIT OF TIRAN. THERE ARE TWO CURRENT VIEWS ON THE WEST BANK: A GEOGRAPHIC COMPROMISE TRTURNING SOME OF THE LANDS TO JORDAN, AND THE CONCEPT OF A CONFEDERATION OF THE AREA WITH ISRAEL AND THE SHARING OF A JOINT ECONOMIC MARKET, DEFENSE ARRANGEMENTS, ETC. IN THE GOLAN A COMPROMISE IS POSSIBLE, BUT ISRAEL WILL WANT TO RETAIN SOME OF THE HIGH GROUND.

B. THOUGH ISRAEL IS READY TO NEGOTIATE WIEH ANYONE, MINISTER PERES THINKS THAT THE NEXT AGREEMENT WILL HAVE TO BE MADE WITH SYRIA. THOUGH IT WOULD BE EASIER TO NEGOTIATE ANOTHER AGREEMENT WITH EGYPT, THE PRESSURE OF THE OTHER ARAB STATES WOULD BE TOO GREAT. NO CONSIDERATION IS BEING GIVEN TO A UNILATERAL WITHDRAWAL FROM OCCUPIED TERRITORY, FOR THIS HAD BEEN DONE BEFORE IN 1956 AND WAS UNSUCCESSFUL.

C. ISRAEL'S SETTLEMENTS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES ARE NOT CONSIDERED BY ISRAEL AN OBSTACLE TO PEACE. THE SETTLEMENTS ARE LOCATED ON THE BORDER AND SERVE AS THE FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE AGAINST TERRORISTS AND AGAINST SURPIRSE ATTACK. THEY ARE REALLY ISRAEL'S ONLY ALTERNATIVE, BECAUSE IT WOULD BE TOO EXPENSIVE TO STATION MILITARY FORCES ALL ALONG THE FRONTIER. HOWEVER, THERE ARE ONLY 5,000 SETTLERS IN ALL OF THE SETTLEMENTS, AND WHEN PEACE WILL COME THIS NUMBER OF PEOPLE COULD BE EASILY ABSORBED BY THE NEIGHBORING STATES. TODAY JEWS ALREADY LIVE IN SYRIA.

D. ON THE SUBJECT OF DEFENSIBLE BORDERS, PERES STATED THAT THERE HAD TO BE A SYNCHRONIZATION BETWEEN COUNTRIES, WEAPONS, AND BORDERS. HE PLACED COUNTRIES INTO THREE CATEGORIES: RESPONSIBLE, BELLIGERENT, AND IRRATIONSL. ELABORATING, HE STATED THAT AN INTERCONTINENTAL BALLISTIC MISSILE DID NOT POSE A THREAT IN THE HANDS OF A RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT, BUT THAT HE DID NOT WANT A HAND-HELD SURFACE-TO-AIR MISSILE IN THE HANDS OF A PLO TERRORIST ONLY THREE MILES FROM BEN GURION AIRPORT.

E. ON THE SUBJECT OF SOUTHERN LEBANON, PERES STATED THAT ISRAEL WAS JOINED BY THE CHRISTIAN AND MOSLEM VILLAGES IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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PAGE 03 TEL AV 07779 170842Z

NOT WANTING THE PLO TO RETURN TO SOUTHERN LEBANON; ALL CONCERNED HAD PAID TOO HIGH A PRICE FOR THEIR PRESENCE BEFORE. HE ADDED THAT ISRAEL DID NOT WANT THE SYRIAN ARMY OR THE ARAB LEAGUE PEACE-KEEPING FORCE ON THE SOUTHERN BORDER OF LEBANON. A LEBANESE ARMY WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE. HE DID NOT ANSWER A QUESTION AS TO ISRAEL'S ACTION IF THE ARAB LEAGUE FORCES WERE TO MOVE TO THE SOUGHERN BORDER.

F. PERES STATED THAT PEACE WILL COME TO THE MIDDLE EASTY IN TEN YEARS FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:

- (1) THE PRICE OF MODERN WEAPONS IS INCREASING AT SUCH A RATE THAT THE ECONOMIC BURDEN WILL BE TOO GREAT.
- (2) MODERN WEAPONS ARE SO LETHAL THAT THE CHANCE OF WINNING IS NOT WORTH THE INEVITABLE PRICE OF DESTRUCTION.
- (3) HE PERCEIVES A TRANSFORMATION OF ARAB SOCIETY, WHICH IS RAPIDLY BECOMING MORE INFORMED, PROGRESSIVE, AND WITH RISING EXPECTATIONS.

G. THE CURRENT DEFENSE BUDGET OF FOUR BILLION DOLLARS OUT OF A GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT OF TEN BILLION DOLLARS IS A HEAVY NATIONAL BURDEN. ISRAEL NEEDS ONE AND A HALF BILLION DOLLARY IN MILITARY AID A YEAR FROM THE UNITED STATES.
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